

WEST YORKSHIRE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY / DISTRICT COUNCILS

**AT A MEETING OF THE ADULT SERVICES LIAISON GROUP
HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON
MONDAY 9 MARCH 2009**

PRESENT: Councillor J Jarosz (Chair)

Councillors	T Brice	-	WYITA
	G Hyde	-	WYITA
	P Wadsworth	-	WYITA
	D Clamp	-	Bradford MC
	B Metcalfe	-	Calderdale MBC
	A Cooper	-	Kirklees MC

Officers in attendance:	I Smith	-	Kirklees MC
	N Holt	-	Metro
	F Whitehead	-	Metro
	S Naylor	-	WYITA

8. COUNCILLOR GEOFFREY WAINWRIGHT

The Chair advised the Liaison Group of the sad death of Councillor Geoffrey Wainwright, a longstanding member of the Integrated Transport Authority and Calderdale Council. In remembrance of Councillor Wainwright members held a minute's silence.

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Robinson (WYITA), S Armitage (Leeds CC) and C Tennant (Wakefield MDC).

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by members at the meeting.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2008 be approved.

12. FUTURE DELIVERY OF THE ACCESSBUS SERVICE

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive regarding the future operation of AccessBus as a registered local bus service.

Members were informed that in order to meet the high demand for the AccessBus service the ITA had endorsed a long term strategy for accessible transport. This included a more targeted approach mixing AccessBus, MetroLocal, Community Transport and taxi support in order to meet the needs of specific customer groups/localities. The first stage to address this included measures to mitigate current cost and demand pressures that affected the delivery of the AccessBus service.

It was noted that recent changes to Government legislation concerning bus service operation offered opportunities to use Bus Services Operators' Grant (BSOG) to significantly reduce the operating costs of AccessBus. To qualify for BSOG the service would need to operate as a flexibly routed demand responsive (DRT) registered local bus service. Members were advised of the requirements for such services which required that passengers pre-booked their trip, pickups and drop offs at agreed given points and destinations, passengers to pay separate fares and the service be available to passengers within a defined geographical area of operation. Operators were not obliged to accept a booking if all vehicles were committed at the time of travel. As AccessBus currently met these conditions there would be no changes/disruptions to current passenger trip patterns.

To prepare the service for operation as a registered bus service a number of actions were ongoing, which included amendments to the concessionary fares scheme to allow AccessBus users free travel before 9.30 am, amendment of the operating contracts for the service to include requirements for operation as a registered service, monitoring/recording keeping requirements for a registered service and a campaign to encourage passengers to obtain a concessionary fares pass.

It was planned to commence operation of the new registered bus service on 1 October 2009 to co-ordinate with the commencement of the new AccessBus Contracts.

RESOLVED - That the planned revisions to the delivery of the AccessBus service be noted.

13. ISSUE OF ACCESSBUS TENDERS

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive regarding tender invitations for the operation of the AccessBus service to reflect delivery as a local flexibly routed bus service.

Members were advised that the current AccessBus contracts expired at the end of September 2009 and that tenders would be issued in early March 2009

in order to allow time for an effective handover of the service. It was reported that the revised contract provisions would reflect changes previously agreed to the conditions of contract for tendered bus services adopted in 2008. The revised service requirements were outlined to members and provided for service registration, fares, BSOG, status of the AccessBus contractor, vehicles, drivers and health and safety responsibilities. Tenders would be issued in one Batch comprising five separate contracts for each of the five Districts. This allowed for the operation of the current number of vehicles running in the respective District area.

Bidders would be allowed to bid for any complete district or any combination of districts. They would be required to submit a Pricing Schedule and an Operating Plan. The closing date for tenders was early April 2009 and tenders would be awarded in June 2009 following evaluation. Interest in the work was high with over 40 operators attending a recent seminar.

It was expected that the revised arrangements would reduce the current costs of operation, but this could only be determined following the tendering process.

RESOLVED - That the planned programme for the renewal of AccessBus contracts be noted.

14. ACCESSBUS UPDATE AND STATISTICS

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive updating members on current AccessBus projects and trends in AccessBus usage.

Current Projects

Members were advised that a replacement booking/information management system for AccessBus had been commissioned from Data Images and Services. The new web based system would allow remote access by the AccessBus operators, as well as offering enhanced service flexibility and efficiency. It was reported that Phase 2 of the booking system would include in-cab dispatch consoles and software that incorporated vehicle positioning to monitor service delivery.

Metro would also take delivery of 19 new Optare Solo low floor accessible buses to replace the V and X registered Solo buses. These vehicles would be fitted with CCTV monitoring system, as well as being the same specification as those purchased for MetroLocal services.

It was stated that the new vehicles would increase accessibility of the service, as the short wheel base narrow bodied buses were able to access more places than the larger vehicles being replaced.

Statistic and Trends

It was reported that 528,965 passenger journeys had been undertaken in the 12 months to 31 January 2009, representing an increase of 1.5% on the previous period. There were 17,995 registered customers, 7,743 of whom were classified as 'active' users. It was noted the majority of journeys continued to be on a long term booking basis and that the number of adhoc bookings remained less than 5% of total trips. Since the last meeting the taxi commitment had reduced by a further 2% to just over 3% of total passenger journeys. This reduction had resulted in a £55,000 financial saving based on the same period last year. Table 1 of the report detailed the total number of registered and active users in each District and the population proportion, as a whole, using the service.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

15. METROLOCAL UPDATE

The Liaison Group considered a progress report of the Passenger Transport Executive regarding MetroLocal services.

Members were reminded of the background to the establishment and implementation of the MetroLocal service, which included the launch of Phase 1 in the Spenn Valley and Huddersfield areas (services ML1 to ML8). It was reported that Phase 2 of the initiative had commenced in the Dewsbury area on 1 September 2008 and included services ML9 to ML12, which encompassed the Shaw Cross, Earlsheaton, Westborough, Eightlands, Saville Town, Thornhill and Grange Moor areas. It was further noted that the MetroLocal services had also been launched in the Birstall, Birkenshaw and Batley localities (ML13, ML14 and ML16 respectively) on 28 October 2008. Two days of service initially reserved for the Mirfield area had now been used to provide an additional service day for each of the highly popular Heckmondwike and Cleckheaton routes.

Members were informed that Metro and Kirklees Council were working together to promote the new and revised routes. It was planned to promote the Huddersfield MetroLocal services via a 'leaflet drop' within 200 metres of each route. The impact of the additional marketing for ML4 and ML5 would be assessed prior to extension to the ML6, ML7 and ML8 routes. A draft copy of the newly formatted MetroLocal information leaflet, which was more user friendly, was circulated to members. Members noted that the leaflet better promoted the 'hail and ride' aspect of the service, which had been of previous concern to the Liaison Group. The Liaison Group was further advised that both Metro and Kirklees Council were also joint funding an eight seater MetroLocal service in the Colne Valley. The service commenced on a trial basis on 23 February 2009 and would be reviewed over Spring 2009 prior to deciding its long term future.

It was agreed that passenger usage figures for the services would be submitted to the next meeting of the Liaison Group.

The proposed marketing campaign was welcomed by members who also suggested that the District Area Committees be utilised to promote the services within their local communities.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That passenger usage figures for the MetroLocal services be submitted to the next meeting of the Liaison Group.

16. CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL UPDATE

The Liaison Group considered a progress report of the Passenger Transport Executive regarding concessionary travel.

English National Concessionary Scheme (ENCS) Passes

Members were advised that to date over 390,000 ENCS passes had been issued with approximately 1,000 applications being processed each week. In order to resolve the issue of bus drivers' recognition of blind people's ENCS passes, Metro was planning to issue distinctive coloured pass holders to blind people primarily to assist recognition by drivers.

It was noted that there were still a small number of previous pass holders who had not applied for a new ENCS pass. In this respect, Metro had agreed with operators that the old style pass be accepted indefinitely for travel within the county. Holders of the old style pass would still continue to be reminded of the need to obtain a new ENCS pass.

Concessionary Travel Reimbursement

It was reported that Metro had concluded three year settlement agreements with the five largest West Yorkshire bus operators to deliver financial stability in terms of funding available, patronage growth, capacity and fares. Following the introduction of free travel data from April to September 2008 had shown a 10% (2.3 million trips) increase in patronage when compared with the same period the year before.

Card Management System (CMS)

Members were reminded that Metro was procuring an integrated Card Management System, which was compatible with ITSO and incorporated electronic data capture, electronic validation and card production system. It was reported that the initial project phase would cover the ENCS passes and that it would also be web based and capable of extension to the issue of non

smart passes, such as the Young Person's photocard. Different elements of the procurement had been separated into 'lots', which would allow the establishment of Framework Contracts with suppliers. It was hoped that these Framework Contracts could then be utilised by other local authorities to purchase these services and, thereby, obtain best value for money.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.